

San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Texas

Site Update - September 2009

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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BACKGROUND:

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits (SJRWP) site is located on the western bank of the San Jacinto River near Houston, immediately north of the Interstate Highway 10 bridge. The site occupies a 20.6 acre tract of land currently owned by Virgil C. McGinnis Trustee and is bounded on the south by Interstate Highway 10, on the east by the San Jacinto River main channel, and on the north and west by shallow water off the River's main channel.

The primary hazardous substances documented at the SJRWP site are dioxins (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans). Samples collected in the disposal pits and in the San Jacinto River have dioxin concentrations as high as 41,300 parts per trillion dioxin-Toxic Equivalents.

A fish consumption advisory based on dioxin is in place on this segment of the watershed. The SJRWP site was

listed on the EPA National Priorities List on March 19, 2008.

STATUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

I. Remedial Investigation (RI)

RI implementation is being negotiated with the potentially responsible parties (PRPs). The purpose of the RI is to define the nature and extent of the contamination from the SJRWP site. Federal trustees (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife) and State of Texas trustees (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas General Land Office) are assisting EPA with the RI implementation.

II. Watershed Management

EPA has concerns that dredging operations in the area around the SJRWP site could impact water quality. EPA is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has authority to issue dredging permits, to resolve these concerns. A conference call was held on September 28, 2009, including members of the Galveston District of the Corps, TCEQ and EPA (the Aug. 31 call did not occur). A draft letter and technical enclosure, as well as a draft public notice, were discussed.

III. Enforcement

EPA is currently reviewing the SJWP PRP Group's response to EPA's Special Notice Letter to Negotiate a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study.

IV. Outreach

In follow-up to the briefing held in Houston on Sept. 1, EPA contacted the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) regarding increased outreach to people fishing in the site area. TDSHS staff prepared a handout and provided it to officials who attended the briefing. TDSHS has offered to provide copies to any communities identified by officials.